

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5482

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BELGRADE 0713

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR YO US MASS

SUBJECT: U.S. ARMS SALES TO YUGOSLAVIA

REF : BELGRADE 0127

1. EDITORIAL IN FEBRUARY 2 EDITION OF "BORBA" DENIES THAT THERE IS ANY CONNECTION BETWEEN U.S. ARMS SALES TO YUGOSLAVIA AND YUGOSLAV RELATIONS WITH "THIRD COUNTRIES". EDITORIAL, TITLED "NONALIGNMENT IN MILITARY RELATIONS" AND WRITTEN BY COLONEL VASILJE CEROVIC SAYS "IT IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE TO US THAT CERTAIN COMMENTARIES IN AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS.... WOULD CONNECT OUR PREVIOUSLY EXPRESSED INTEREST IN PURCHASING (SMALL AMOUNTS OF) MILITARY ARMS AND EQUIPMENT FROM THE U.S.A. WITH YUGOSLAVIA'S POLITICO-MILITARY RELATIONS WITH THIRD COUNTRIES." SUCH ERRONEOUS CONCLUSIONS ARE "EXPLAINED BY THE INERTIA OF THE BLOC MENTALITY SUCH MISTAKES IN REASONING DO NOT CONTRIBUTE TO GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND YUGOSLAVIA."

2. CEROVIC ALSO ATTACKS FOREIGN NEWSPAPERMEN WHO SEEK TO "MYSTIFY" THE ROLE OF THE YUGOSLAV ARMED FORCES, SEPARATING IT "FROM THE WORKING PEOPLE AND CITIZENS", AND ASCRIBING TO IT THE KEY ROLE IN YUGOSLAVIA'S FUTURE DEVELOPMENT.

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3. COMMENT: RECENT ARTICLES IN WESTERN PRESS HAVE

SPECULATED THAT YUGOSLAVIA DESIRES ARMS SALES FROM U.S. TO HELP MAINTAIN ITS INDEPENDENCE FROM MOSCOW (DODER, IN WASHINGTON POST JANUARY 12), AND THAT IT WANTS TOW MISSILES TO DEFEND ITSELF IN CASE OF "A MASSIVE TANK ATTACK ON THE PANNONIAN PLAIN" (AFP, JANUARY 13). MILITARY SECURITY IN POST-TITO ERA AND YUGOSLAVIA'S INTERNAL STABILITY AND ROLE TO BE PLAYED BY JNA ARE ALL QUESTIONS OF UTMOST SENSITIVITY FOR PRESENT LEADERSHIP, AND SPECULATION OF THE KIND ENGAGED IN RECENTLY BY WESTERN CORRESPONDENTS WAS BOUND TO CAUSE APOPLEZY IN BELGRADE. (DEURING CODEL MORGAN VISIT RECEPTION. FSFA OFFICIAL STARCEVIC EVEN ACCUSED AMBASSADOR OF DELIBERATELY GENERATING DOD ARTICLE.) IT MUST BE REMEMBERED OUGH THAT YUGOSLAVS THEMSELVES STARTED LATEST ROUND OF SPECULATION WITH DECEMBER INTERVIEW OF THREE GENERALS IN BELGRADE NEWS WEEKLY "NIN" (REFTEL). IN NONSPECIFIC TERMS THEY DISCUSSED, INTER ALIA, THE NEED FOR ACQUIRING MODERN MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO REPULSE POTENTIAL INVADER RELYING ON TANKS, AND JNA,S REFUSAL TO BE ARBITER OF INTERNAL POLITICAL EVENTS THOUGH IT WAS NOT PREPARED TO "LOCK ITSELF IN THE BARRACKS". YUGOSLAV GRIPE AGAINST WESTERN JOURNALISTS IS THAT NOW THEY HAVE CARRIED THINGS TOO FAR BY NAMING NAMES.

SWEITZER

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